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CHRISTOPHER C. BROWN.

In Memoriam

Christopher C. Brown

1834-1904

Contributed to the
Illinois State Historical Society
by George H. Black

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IN MEMORIAM

CHRISTOPHER C. BROWN, 1834-1904.

(By George N. Black.)

We can not but feel sad when we realize that another of our steadfast members has been stricken down by the hand of death. Between the departed brother and myself there had long existed the closest bonds of friendship. It is therefore fitting that I should add my tribute of respect to his memory. Eulogy of the dead is the consecrated duty and privilege of the living. Our tribute is not rendered in obedience to the cold and stately dictates of fashion. It has its source in the deepest sympathies of the human heart. For it is right and proper to tell the world the worth of those whom we lament.

In the removal of our departed friend we have another lesson on the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death; and yet, though these lessons come to us so often we dislike to be taught by them, and therefore put the certain as far away as possible, as if that would keep it from coming back to us. It is a lesson taught by the proverbial philosophies of the world, as well as by the hard facts of experience. We all remember the words of brave Horatius, as he kept the bridge—

"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late."

—Macaulay.

And that other poet, nearer our own day, who shows the uncertainty of time and place, saying—

"We know that moons shall wax and wane,
And summer birds from far shall cross the sea;
But who can tell us when we'll meet with death."

The time may be uncertain, but "Death spares neither king nor beggar." Knowing this, we may well ask, in the pathetic words of William Knox, "O why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" The word of God tells us that "Here we have no continuing city."

To this community at large the death of Mr. C. C. Brown was a matter of real regret, and to us who knew him best it was an event full of sadness. Those of us who were associated with him so long mourn his loss with the deepest sorrow and regret, for he had won a place in many hearts. He was a member of a family which has long been prominent in the history of Sangamon county; and they have always been men of character, ability and true social worth. We may

call Mr. Brown a representative man, a son of the soil, because he was born in the State. He came to Springfield early in life. He grew up with the growth of the city, and was identified with its greatness. He was a man of the highest integrity, unblemished morals, and of the noblest distinction in the line of duty. He was a man of kindly impulses, and always ready to aid the unfortunate. He was a helper of the helpless, and a giver of strength to those who had no strength. He always had a kind word and a helping hand to those who needed them. Like Abou Ben Adhem he was "One who loved his fellow-men."

Our departed brother has gone hence to return no more forever; but the memory of his good words and kindly deeds will long survive, embalmed in the hearts of those who knew him and appreciated his worth. Few people realize how much good he did in his quiet way. For as old George Herbert quaintly remarks, "Good words are worth much and cost little." His was the charity that shuns publicity and which follows our Lord's well remembered injunction, and "doeth its alms in secret," not desiring to be seen of men. It will be readily understood that of the best portion of a good man's life, his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love, are those that are worth most. No record of them is kept, except on high, or in the grateful hearts of those who have been benefited and relieved. The world knows little or nothing of them now, but the record will be revealed hereafter, when the plaudit comes, "What ye did unto mine, ye did unto me."

One who knew the worth of a dead friend (a friend who was missed and mourned, like ours) has written some very appropriate lines, which may be applied truthfully to our deceased friend—our loved and lost.

"To the last hour, when the last man shall die,
And our race shall cease to be, death never came,
And never will come without affliction.
The dying may be ready to depart,
For sleep and death are one to them, but we
Who love them and are left to mourn, to whom
The place once filled by them is filled no more,
From us a light has gone, the sun seems dark,
A shadow fallen at high-noon. To us
A consternation and a lamentation,
The sorrow of all sorrows shall descend,
And shall with us abide, till in our turn
We follow them, and others mourn for us."

It would seem proper that just here something should be said as to who Mr. Brown was, what he was, and how he became the man he was. He was a member of the hardy Scotch-Irish race drawn from the province of Ulster. Ulster was settled by a colony which went forth from the "land of brown heath and shaggy wood," in search of a new home less bleak than the bare hillsides of western Scotland. They took with them their Scottish characteristics and their Scottish Calvinism to their new home in the north of Ireland, and then to the Western World when they crossed the broad Atlantic. Heredity made Mr. Brown what he was, because "blood will tell."

Mr. Christopher C. Brown was born in the village of Athens, then in Sangamon county, Ill., (though now in Menard county). He was born on October 21st, 1834, and was the son of William Bartlett

Brown and Harriet Lowry Brown. His father and mother with five children, moved from Greensburg, Kentucky, to Athens in November 1833. Prior to this removal to Illinois, William B. Brown's brother-in-law, James D. Allen, had settled at Athens, and engaged in the mercantile business. Mr. C. C. Brown's mother was the daughter of Captain David Allen, who served in the War of 1812, and took an active part in the Indian wars of the "Dark and Bloody Ground." She was born December 17th, 1806, and was married to William B. Brown, on December 31st, 1822, at Greensburg, Kentucky. She died October 7th, 1835, at Athens. It is recorded of her that she had a cultivated mind, an amiable disposition, and, above all, a lovely Christian character. William B. Brown, his father, was born at Greensburg, Kentucky, on February 2d, 1802. About the time of his marriage he entered into partnership with his father, Daniel Brown, who was of Scotch-Irish parentage, born at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in September 1765. He is mentioned in Allen's History of Kentucky, as a man of most exemplary piety and a ruling elder of the Presbyterian church for nearly fifty years. His mother, née Theresa Bartlett, was born at Beverly, Massachusetts, on January 14th, 1782. She was a near relative of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Findley, President of Princeton College, and an eminent scholar and great divine in his day.

Soon after his mother's death, which took place, in 1835, the child Christopher, at the earnest solicitation of his uncle, Daniel C. Brown, who was married and childless, was taken to Kentucky by his father, and placed in the uncle's care. When the uncle died in 1840, the child was sent to live at Greensburg, with his grandparents. While living with them, before he was ten years of age, he spent two winters at Hodgenville, Kentucky, where he boarded with an aunt. When at Greensburg, he attended the school known as "The Seminary." Early in 1844 his grandfather being quite old, after a consultation of the relatives, it was thought best to send him home to his father in Illinois. In June of that year he started from Greensburg for Louisville in a covered wagon. At Louisville he took a steamboat for St. Louis, Missouri, and sailed upon the same river which Dickens, two years earlier, thought so monotonous and so wearisome. In writing of this trip, the lad says he had never seen a steamboat till then, and he was charmed with his journey. He stopped at "Barnum's," the leading hotel of that day. (St. Louis had only about 40,000 inhabitants then; but was regarded as the "Great City" of the West.) He took a steamboat to Meredosia, Illinois, and reached that place late in the evening. He had to ride in a skiff to the hotel, and had to enter it through a second story window because the river was in high flood. He says that he was greatly disappointed when the landlord told him that he had nothing for supper but cocoanut milk. He drank a cup full of it, and went to bed with the water washing all sides of the hotel. From Meredosia to Jacksonville he was hauled in a wagon drawn by a mule team, over wooden ties, and from there to Springfield in a two horse wagon. On his arrival at Springfield, he was taken to the residence of a relative, Colonel Robert Allen, and there met his brother Daniel, who was attending school at

that place. His father was living at Sangamontown, seven miles northwest of Springfield. He was superintending a flour mill, which was run by water and steam power; he had also a lathing mill, which was managed by his two sons, Daniel and David. In it they sawed all the lath used in building the first State house at Springfield, now the Sangamon county court house. On account of the high water in Spring creek, it was some days before he could reach his father's house. He describes his father at that time as being six feet in height, weighing about two hundred pounds, and having hair as white as the driven snow. He was forty-two years of age, and was known in the neighborhood as "Squire Brown." When any one was sick in the vicinity he was sent for as a doctor; if the patient died Mr. Brown was the person to see that the dead was properly buried. If any legal difficulty arose in the neighborhood he was consulted as a lawyer. In a word, he was the "man of the neighborhood," and was universally loved and respected by all who knew him. He said that he had known his father to spend days and nights with the neighbors in those chill and fever days, administering medicine bought at his own expense for their relief, and never knew him to receive one dollar in compensation for either legal or medical services. Mr. Brown, in speaking of his step-mother, writes that some years before his return to Illinois his father had married a most estimable woman, whose maiden name was Loriunda Buckman. She was born on Sept. 9th, 1815, at Potsdam, New York. He bears testimony to her faithfulness as a wife and mother, not only to her own, but to her step-children. She gave birth to six children, Joel B., Hulda, Sebastian, Mary, Frank B., and James B. Brown. She died on Sept. 9th, 1892, aged seventy-seven years. Mr. Brown's father lived at Sangamontown until 1847, and at that time he bought a small farm of twenty-five acres, with no improvements, about one mile from Sangamontown, and soon after bought a log house, a story and a half high, which he moved on to this small farm. Christopher C. Brown went to school during the winter in 1844-45: his father being the teacher, and worked in summer cutting wood, milking cows, washing dishes, and doing anything that turned up in the line of work. His father was a justice of the peace and he frequently heard Abraham Lincoln, E. D. Baker, John T. Stuart, Stephen T. Logan, and other members of the Springfield bar, arguing cases before him. Hearing these arguments doubtless fired him with an ambition, even at that early age, to become a lawyer. His brothers, David and Daniel, had opened a drug store at Petersburg, and in 1849 he joined them to learn the business, and continued with them until the fall of 1851. During his stay there he attended the academy two winters. In the fall of 1851 he was sent to Hillsboro, Illinois, to attend the Lutheran college at that place, then under the charge of the Rev. Francis Springer. His father moved to Taylorville to open a drug store, and the young student left Hillsboro and went to assist his father in this new venture. His father's health failed soon after going to Taylorville, and he with his family moved to Petersburg to be under the care of a physician, but he continued to grow worse, and in his fifty-first year he died. After his father's death his brother David moved to Springfield to engage in the

practice of law, and the young student left Petersburg and lived with his brother David, reading law and attending school part of the time at the Illinois Lutheran college. In the fall of 1855, he went to Lexington, Ky., and attended the law school of Transylvania University. But his means would not permit his spending more than one session at the law school, and he returned to Springfield, where he studied closely and soon made application for a license to practice law. The Supreme Court appointed Abraham Lincoln and William H. Herndon to examine him, and Mr. Brown used to tell laughingly, how easy his examination was. When he appeared before his two examiners, Mr. Lincoln, said: "Now Chris, we think we know your fitness to be a lawyer, and we don't think you need to be examined. If you can win cases, you'll succeed, if you can't win them you'll fail. It's all in these two points that success or failure lies. But Herndon and I think you have grit enough in you to succeed, and we both know you'll try your hardest. So we'll sign your recommendation for you." "When they had done so, they shook hands with me, and Mr. Lincoln said: 'Go on and prosper. The world's before you, and we are sure you'll do well at the Bar.'" That was all. On their recommendation, the clerk of the Supreme Court issued him a license in 1857. He then entered into partnership with his brother David, in the practice of the law. In the spring of 1857 he ran for city attorney on a Citizens' ticket, and was defeated by Mr. Charles A. Keyes, who was the Democratic candidate, (the Democrats had a large majority in the city, and he was defeated by thirty votes). About this time his brother was advised to give up the law business owing to poor health, and he moved to a farm a few miles from the city. Upon this, Mr. C. C. Brown went to Cairo, Ill., to practice law, and take charge of some property in which some of the prominent citizens of Springfield had invested money. He lived there one year, was successful in the practice of law and real estate speculation. While there he took an active part in all enterprises that tended to advance the material and moral interests of the city. He was selected by the citizens to deliver the Fourth of July oration, and his address was highly commended by the people and the public press. In after years, in speaking of this speech he said it was a regular patriotic address, the best he could make. He tried to please the people. It began with the causes of the revolution and traced it's course from the Declaration of Independence down through the long struggle, beginning with the first shot fired at Lexington to the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. But, he was wont to add, "it was not a "spread eagle" speech, meant to tickle the crowd and pander to their baser feelings. *You may be sure that I did my very best in it.*" And we see it was a success. He also took quite an active part in politics as a Republican, and in the spring of 1858, made a speech before the first Republican convention ever held at Cairo, or in Egypt. He was appointed, by Governor Bissell, public administrator of Alexander county, (the first office he ever held). Judge Lightner made him school commissioner of the same county, with power to examine teachers and issue certificates of qualification. He knew almost every man, woman and child in Cairo, which had then about

four thousand inhabitants. As an evidence of the esteem in which he was held, it may be stated that when he left Cairo to return to Springfield, a gathering of two or three hundred citizens accompanied him to the train to bid him good bye. In later years he affiliated with the Democratic party, though he was never an intense partisan. At Springfield, he opened an office and resumed his practice as a lawyer. On October 20th, 1859, he was united in marriage to Miss Elizabeth Jane Stuart (daughter of Major John T. Stuart). Of this union were born three children, Stuart, on August 21st, 1860; Edwards, on May 31st, 1863, and Paul, on January 20th, 1868. Paul died on August 22nd, 1880; the other two children are still living.

On January 1st, 1860, upon the solicitation of Judge Benj. S. Edwards, he entered as a partner into the office of Stuart & Edwards (a law partnership which had existed from 1843 to that date). The name of the new firm was changed to Stuart, Edwards & Brown, and this firm continued until the death of Major Stuart, on November 28th, 1885. After this Judge Edwards and Mr. Brown remained together until death called away Mr. Edwards, on February 4th, 1886. These firms ranked high among the lawyers, and had an immense practice in the various courts. Mr. Brown, as the junior member, was kept very busy. After Judge Edwards' death, Mr. Brown took his son Stuart into partnership for some months, and then Judge William J. Allen, of Southern Illinois, entered the firm, which was called Allen, Brown & Brown. When Judge Allen was appointed judge of the U. S. District Court, Judge Samuel P. Wheeler, of Cairo, Ill., entered the firm, and the name was changed to Brown, Wheeler & Brown. In November, 1897, Mr. Logan Hay entered the firm, and its name was again changed to Brown, Wheeler, Brown & Hay.

Mr. Brown's first wife died March 2, 1869, and about three years later he married at Chicago on June 4th, 1872, Mrs. Caroline Owsley Farnsworth, daughter of John E. Owsley, formerly of Springfield. Of this union were born three children, Elizabeth Jane, on May 4th, 1873; Amelia, on January 24th, 1875, and Owsley, on May 28th, 1877, Amelia died in infancy. The other two children are still living.

Mr. Brown had many honors conferred upon him during his life time. Among them he was appointed school superintendent of Alexander county, Illinois. He was made alderman of the old Third ward of Springfield, on the Republican ticket, and while filling that office he introduced and had passed the ordinance for sewerage the "town branch," into which the most of the sewers of the city are now emptied. We can thus justly claim that he was the Father of the sewerage system of Springfield. He was president or trustee of the Springfield Public Library from 1881 to 1901, during which years it became in books and circulation the third largest public library in the State. In 1888 he was chosen, by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, as a delegate to the Pan-Presbyterian Council which met in Exeter Hall, London. He took part in the convention and when it closed he visited, in company with his wife and two youngest children, most of the countries of Central Europe, going as far east as Prague. It was a delightful trip, which he always remembered and referred to with much pleasure.

He was one of the founders of the Bettie Stuart Institute. He contributed very liberally at the beginning of the institute in 1868, and made many donations to it up to the time of his death. (The institute was named in memory of his deceased wife.) He was president of the Springfield boiler and manufacturing company, and president of the Latham coal Company. He was vice-president of the Sangamon loan and trust company. A leading stockholder in the Woodside coal company; trustee of the Lincoln Monument Association; director of the McCormick Theological Seminary; and director of the Springfield furniture company. He was superintendent of the First Presbyterian Sunday school, of Springfield, Illinois, and Ruling Elder in the same church for thirty-seven years.

Mr. C. C. Brown was in his seventieth year when he died. He had not been in robust health for some years, and five or six years previous to his death he consulted an eminent physician in Chicago, who, after a thorough examination and diagnosis, pronounced his malady Bright's disease. Although Mr. Brown realized that he had not many years to live, he continued to maintain his bright and sunny disposition; he never alluded to his real condition, not wishing to alarm his friends, and to all appearance was in fairly good health up to within a few weeks of his death. He had been ailing for a few days before he died, but no one expected a fatal termination to his sickness, at that time. But the hour of his departure was at hand. He heard his Master's call, and he responded to it. His passing away was like the departure of a weary soul worn out with the toils and trials of this wilderness world. His work was done, he had earned his rest; and God gave him a new day, for death to him was the Gate of Life. Our friend passed away quietly in the night. It is believed that death came to him suddenly and painlessly. The immediate cause of his death was given out as angina pectoris, more popularly known as neuralgia of the heart. As the real fatal illness lasted but a little while, it left no time for a death-bed testimony, but his testimony had been given already. It was seen in his whole life—a life which in no ordinary degree adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour. It was a life of quiet unostentatious service. If the best proofs of true religion lie in its fruits, the proof of our friend's religion was sure. For his good works were uniform and permanent, not spasmodic. As a Christian he grew in grace as he grew in years. He was a living epistle known and read of all men. One who knew him well said, after his death,—“If this world was made up of men such as Christopher C. Brown, it would be almost a heaven on earth.” Although Mr. Brown was so strongly attached to his own chosen religious faith, he was inclined to liberality in matters of religion, being entirely free from all forms of bigotry, and not disposed to force his opinions upon others.

Our departed friend had the hope and the consolation of the Christian faith. He believed with Tennyson:

“For though from out our bourne of Time and Place,
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my pilot face to face,
When I have crossed the bar.”

A faith like that takes away the fear of death. He has crossed the bar, to our sorrow, but to his gain. And yet he is not lost, but only gone before. Longfellow in his beautiful poem on "Resignation," says:

"There is no death! What seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian
Whose portals we call death."

And Cicero tells us, "That last day (of death) does not bring extinction to us, but change of place." And so thought most of the great thinkers of ancient Greece and Rome.

His pastor, the Rev. Dr. Thomas D. Logan, said in his funeral sermon: "In the death of Mr. C. C. Brown, our church has lost its Barnabas. Throughout his long and useful life he has been a true 'son of consolation.' Nature endowed him with a commanding and inspiring presence and a sunny disposition, which grace sweetened and sanctified. He always reminded me of John Bunyan's Mr. Great-heart, for his heart overflowed with generous impulses. He was a christian gentleman of the best type of the old school. In his tongue was the law of kindness. It was his constant desire to smooth the pathway before his fellowmen, and to make all within the sphere of his influence feel comfortable and happy. * * * He knew what he believed, and why he believed it. There was no uncertainty as to his principles. He was a man you could safely tie to, for you always found him just there. * * * He illustrated for our day the meaning of Sampson's riddle, suggested by the swarm of bees that had its hive in the carcass of a lion, 'Out of the strong came forth sweetness'."

The old Greek satirist, Lucian, in his "Dialogues of the Dead," represents Mercury as classing the aged among those who die unlamented. Our departed friend was old in years. He had reached the allotted three score years and ten, when men expect to be in "the sere and yellow leaf", but his death was greatly lamented, even with bitter tears. At his funeral service, in despite of a heavy rain, the church was filled. All classes and conditions were there; rich and poor, high and low, to show their respect for him they would see no more. He was well beloved, and there were good reasons for it. His genial disposition, his noble and manly qualities, his enduring and loving devotion to his friends, and his utterly unselfish nature, won him hosts of friends, and many were those who sorrowed for his death. Few dry eyes were among the people as the service closed, and the remains were carried away to the narrow house, the last abode of all.

And now, a few parting words. He lived, he loved, he labored and he died. That is the story of nearly every human life; but I may add to our departed friend's record, that he lived for a purpose, and the world is the better because he has lived in it. He died leaving behind him a memory fragrant with the perfume of many kindly and generous deeds and words. There is an old maxim which had struck its roots deep into the hearts and consciences of men before the Lord Jesus Christ uttered His Divine Sermon on the Mount, before the Greek sages taught the Athenians the precepts of right living, and even before Confucius, in the darker obscurity of antiquity, illumined the civilization of his time by the doctrine of peace on earth and good

will to men. That ancient maxim was, "Of the dead speak nothing but good." And I can safely follow its teachings to-day. To say that our departed friend was faultless, would be to bestow upon him the attributes of the Deity. He was a man, and he had frailties and weaknesses like others of the human race. But he tried to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. And that is what the Lord requires of every man who seeks to walk aright before him. May we all be able to follow our brother's example in this; and may we never forget that we too are mortal.

I would gladly say more in praise of our lamented friend, but I have neither the scholar's pen, nor the poet's fancy; besides, I think them needless in this instance. His deeds speak more eloquently than my words would. But the beautiful poem of Fitz-Greene Halleck to the memory of Joseph Rodman Drake expresses just what I would like to have written if I could. I will quote a few of the lines—

"Green be the turf above thee
Friend of my better days;
None knew thee but to love thee!
None named thee but to praise.

When hearts, whose truth was proven,
Like thine, are laid in earth,
There should a wreath be woven
To tell the world their worth.

It should be mine to braid it
Around thy faded brow,
But I've in vain essayed it,
And feel I cannot now.

While memory bids me weep thee,
Nor thoughts nor words are free,
The grief is fixed too deeply
That mourns a man like thee."

I need add nothing to these eloquent verses, and language would fail me to say all that I would like to say about our departed and lamented brother and associate. I cannot, therefore, better close this inadequate memorial tribute than by bidding him farewell. A last farewell to him who was as a friend and a brother to me, a true comrade in the battle of life. "Brother, fare-thee-well, but not forever! May my soul, when my hour comes, be with thine!"



